

Small Berry Custards

Conventional berry tarts are made by baking a shell of cookie dough and, when it is cold, filling it with custard, arranging berries on top, and finishing it with a glaze. However, it is easier, faster, and less caloric to make this similar recipe without the dough. The custard is spooned into individual soufflé molds or small glass bowls and topped with berries glazed with seedless raspberry jam. Any small molds with about a 1/2-cup capacity that are pretty enough to serve in the dining room will work here.

4 Servings

Pastry Cream

- 1 1/4 cups half-and-half
- 1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 large egg yolks
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

- 4 medium strawberries
- 1 small container (about 6 ounces) raspberries
- 1/4 cup seedless raspberry jam
- 4 sprigs fresh mint, for garnish (optional)
- Store-bought cookies (optional)

For the pastry cream: Bring the half-and-half and vanilla to a boil in a small saucepan. Meanwhile, combine the egg yolks and sugar in a medium bowl with a whisk. Add the flour to the yolks and mix it in well with the whisk. Pour the hot half-and-half into the yolk mixture and whisk it in. Pour the entire mixture back into the saucepan and bring it to a boil, whisking until it thickens. Boil for 10 seconds longer, remove from the heat, and cool.

When ready to assemble the desserts, divide the cream among four 1/2-cup molds. Cut each strawberry lengthwise into 6 to 8 slices and stand the slices up all around the edge of the molds so the tips extend a little beyond the edge. Arrange a layer of raspberries on top of the cream in each mold inside the strawberry border. Heat the raspberry jam for about 10 seconds in a microwave if it is too firm to use as a glaze and coat the berries with the jam. Garnish with the mint sprigs if using. Serve with cookies, if you like.